

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

In Opposition to an Act Implementing the Governor's Proposed Budget Recommendations for
Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)

Constance Marie Anderson, New Britain

February 23, 2017

Good evening **Senators Osten and Formica, Representatives Walker**, and members of the Appropriations Committee.

Hi, my name is Constance Marie Anderson and I am a registered voter in the town of New Britain. I'm in recovery from mental health issues. I'm also a person that benefits that the Department of Mental Health Services.

I am here to testify on **HB 7027, An Act Concerning the Governor's Budget Recommendations**.

I am opposed to the proposed cuts to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services that will **virtually eliminate Regional Mental Health Boards and the Regional Action Councils**. I am also opposed to cuts to much needed outpatient services.

Back in the day, I was an angry person. A lot of people gave up on me. I also gave up on myself. But there were people like Sheryl Breetz, the past Executive Director of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board (NCRMHB), and Phoebe Hamilton, the Coordinator of the Regional Consumer Advisory Council (RCAC) who helped me with my anger problems. I also started to go to groups at the social club. I learned a lot from the groups and took advantage of the opportunities there. I graduated from the Advocacy Unlimited Recovery University program and learned to help other people in recovery. I became a member of Regional Mental Health Board's Catchment Area Council 19. Here I met other community members and helped improve mental health services. I am proud of being an advocate with my Catchment Area Council, and with Marcia DuFore of the Regional Mental Health Board. I am proud to be featured in the newspaper for my efforts. I like being part of the Regional Mental Health Board because people listen to what we have to say. I have learned a lot from my work with the Regional Board. This organization doesn't stigmatize.

I also joined the Regional Consumer Advisory Council (RCAC) and became a leader of my peer group. RCAC is group of people in recovery. I enjoy our work with the mini grants because it allows me to work with people on their recovery projects. Having people work on grants, learning valuable skills, and following through on their commitment to recovery are really important. Additionally, the meetings, dinners, and opportunities to talk with other people have been invaluable. The fellowship offered through RCAC is so important for recovery. I now believe it is important to give back and to help my community.

Thanks to the Regional Mental Health Board and the RCAC, I learned a lot. I learned from my peers, being on boards, and speaking up in committees. If it wasn't for the work I do with the Regional Board and RCAC, I wouldn't be the woman that I am today. I also benefit from the Department of Mental Health offering outpatient programs that help me work on myself. They offer therapy which helps me a lot. I am proud to have worked within the system of mental healthcare, and I am proud to say that I am able to pay my taxes as an American. I have earned money while helping others, and now I own a car. Please do not cut the Regional Mental Health Boards, or outpatient programs from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services budget because there are many more people benefiting from these services. Thank you.